

Project Proposal

Proposal Title: Big Hollow Bullhog - Phase 2

Proposal Number: 1380

DWR Region: Central Region

Lead Agency: BLM

County: Tooele

Project Manager: Brook Chadwick

PM Phone: 8014915653

Regional Priority: Within Focus Area

Project Type: Terrestrial Habitat

Proposed Start Date: 7/1/2009

Project Location: 4½ miles northeast of Terra on the southern portion of the Stansbury Mountains.

Project Description: Bullhog 282 acres and lop, scatter, pile and burn 143 acres of juniper trees

Description of Problem/Need: Juniper expansion on the southern end of the Stansbury Mountains has degraded sagebrush habitat and greatly increased the risk of property damage due to wildfire for residents in the Big Hollow area. Reducing juniper on the landscape will enhance wildlife habitat, improve fire regime condition class, and reduce the buildup of hazardous fuels.

Healthy sagebrush ecosystems should consist of a diverse array of plants and support a wide variety of wildlife species. However, sagebrush habitat on the southern end of the Stansbury Mountains is seriously degraded due to juniper encroachment. Where junipers dominate they outcompete understory species for light, moisture, and nutrients eventually resulting in nearly complete removal of the understory. Without understory vegetation the native seed bank is depleted and the site becomes susceptible to soil erosion and invasion by cheatgrass. Excessive fuel buildup can eventually lead to catastrophic wildfire which may threaten private property and further degrade the ecosystem by promoting the growth and expansion of cheatgrass. Once established, cheatgrass becomes a major obstacle preventing the recolonization and growth of native perennial vegetation. In order to curb this process of degradation it is essential that action be taken. Degraded sagebrush habitat can be improved by removing junipers and reseeding, when necessary, with perennial species. This proactive approach reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire and possible cheatgrass encroachment by decreasing fuel loads and replenishing the seedbank with desirable species. The Salt Lake Field Office of the BLM will treat the encroaching juniper to decrease the risk of high severity wildfire, restore ecosystem function, and improve wildlife habitat.

Objectives: 1. ☐ Improve Fire Regime Condition Class, decrease fuel loading and reduce the risk of catastrophic crown fire by removing at least 90% of existing junipers.

2. ☐ Improve wildlife habitat by allowing understory species to release naturally following juniper mastication

Relevance to Strategic Plans: The project area occurs within the sagebrush steppe type which is one of the key habitats identified in the WAP. This area supports mule deer (Tier III) and greater sage grouse (Tier II). Numerous other species of concern (Tier III) also inhabit the area including neotropical birds and raptors.

The proposed treatments lie within Central Region UPCD focus areas.

The proposed treatments will help address strategies outlined in the WDARM sage grouse conservation plan; By 2010, reduce pinyon/juniper stands from sage-grouse use areas. Reduce the threat of conversion of sagebrush stands to invasive/noxious weed communities. Work with public and private partners to implement livestock management plans that address seasonal needs of sage-grouse and livestock operations. By 2016, increase brood-rearing habitat quality in the Resource Area.

The proposed project will address some of the habitat management strategies outlined in the deer management plan for herd unit 18 Oquirrh - Stansbury including: continue to restore and improve sagebrush steppe habitats critical to deer according to DWR's Habitat Initiative; cooperate with federal land management agencies and private landowners in carrying out habitat improvements such as reseedings, controlled burns, water developments etc. on public and private lands; and maintain and/or enhance forage production through direct range improvements throughout the unit to achieve population management objectives.

The proposed projects will address the following goals and objectives of the Division of Wildlife Resources most recent strategic management plan:

Resource Goal: expand wildlife populations and conserve sensitive species by protecting and improving wildlife habitat.

Objective 1: protect existing wildlife habitat and improve 500,000 acres of critical habitats and watersheds throughout the state by 2011.

Objective 2: Increase fish and game populations to meet management plan objectives and expand quality fishing and hunting opportunities.

Projects of this nature are identified in the BLM's Onaqui Mountain West Allotment Management Plan (1986), and the Onaqui Mountain Habitat Management Plan for the Onaqui wild horse herd, Pony Express Resource Management Plan (RMP) (1990) Decision One page 56, as amended by the SLFO Fire Management Plan (FMP) (1998) Alternative 2-Proposed Action/Integrated Fire/Resource Management Plan page seven in order to improve the condition of the rangeland. The objectives in the Government Creek Fire Management Unit are to utilize fuels treatments to reduce fire severity and occurrence and reduce hazardous fuel accumulation in areas that will reduce the threat of large uncontrolled wildland fires, create mosaics to increase edge effect, and improve wildlife and plant diversity (BLM-Salt Lake Field Office, Fire Management Plan, September 2004). The Big Hollow WUI DNA (UT-020-2006-0014) and Clover Creek #20 East Onaqui EA (UT-020-2004-0032) specify the need and authorization for mechanical treatments in this area.

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Potential Risks: Increase in cheatgrass after treatment. Drought.

Proposed Methods: 1. ☐ Use rubber-tired or tracked bullhogs to masticate 282 acres of juniper during fall 2009. The treatment will remove at least 90% of the junipers. Residual trees are to be of varying size and age classes and left in small clumps to act as untreated islands. The edges of the treatment unit will be designed in a mosaic fashion to blend into the natural landscape and to increase edge effect. All brush species will be avoided when possible.
2. ☐ Slash, pile, cover (SPC) 143 acres of juniper not suitable for mastication due to steep slopes; trees will be cut using chainsaws;
3. ☐ Burn SPC piles during winter or early spring;

Shapefile Name: 1380_Big_Hollow_Ph2_2009

Seed Source:

UPCD Reg Team Coord Date: 11/6/2008

**Proposed
NEPA Action:**

**Proposed
Arch Action:**

☒ **Vegetation Monitoring** ☐ **Wildlife Monitoring**

Monitoring Information: The BLM will conduct at least two 1/10 acre stand data monitoring sites which include photo points within the treatment boundary. These plots will be read prior to treatment and soon after treatment. The data collected include juniper canopy cover, density, basal diameter, and height.

In addition, one Range Trend study was established within the project area in 2006.

Grazing Management: Treatments will occur within the Onaqui East Allotment. Juniper encroachment is listed as a threat to native and seeded areas on the allotment. The mastication treatment would improve the demand for forage among livestock and wildlife and would move the area towards the attainment of rangeland health standards (43 CFR 4100-0-2). The treatment will reduce competition with the existing understory

SPECIES BENEFITING

Greater Sage-grouse	Mule Deer	Ferruginous Hawk	Neotropical Birds
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LAND OWNERSHIP

Owner	Acres
BLM	427
Total	427

PROPOSED FUNDING

Source	Amount Requested	Date Approved	Amount Approved
BLM	\$91,587.00		\$0.00
BLM ARRA	\$64,860.00	3/12/2009	\$64,860.00
Totals	\$156,447.00		\$64,860.00

PROPOSED BUDGET

Item	Description	DWR Account	Partner Contrib.
NEPA	Prep, scoping, consult beyond normal staff time	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
Personal Services	Project layout and admin, seasonal time 14 days	\$0.00	\$1,800.00
Personal Services	Monitoring, seasonal time 2 days	\$0.00	\$300.00

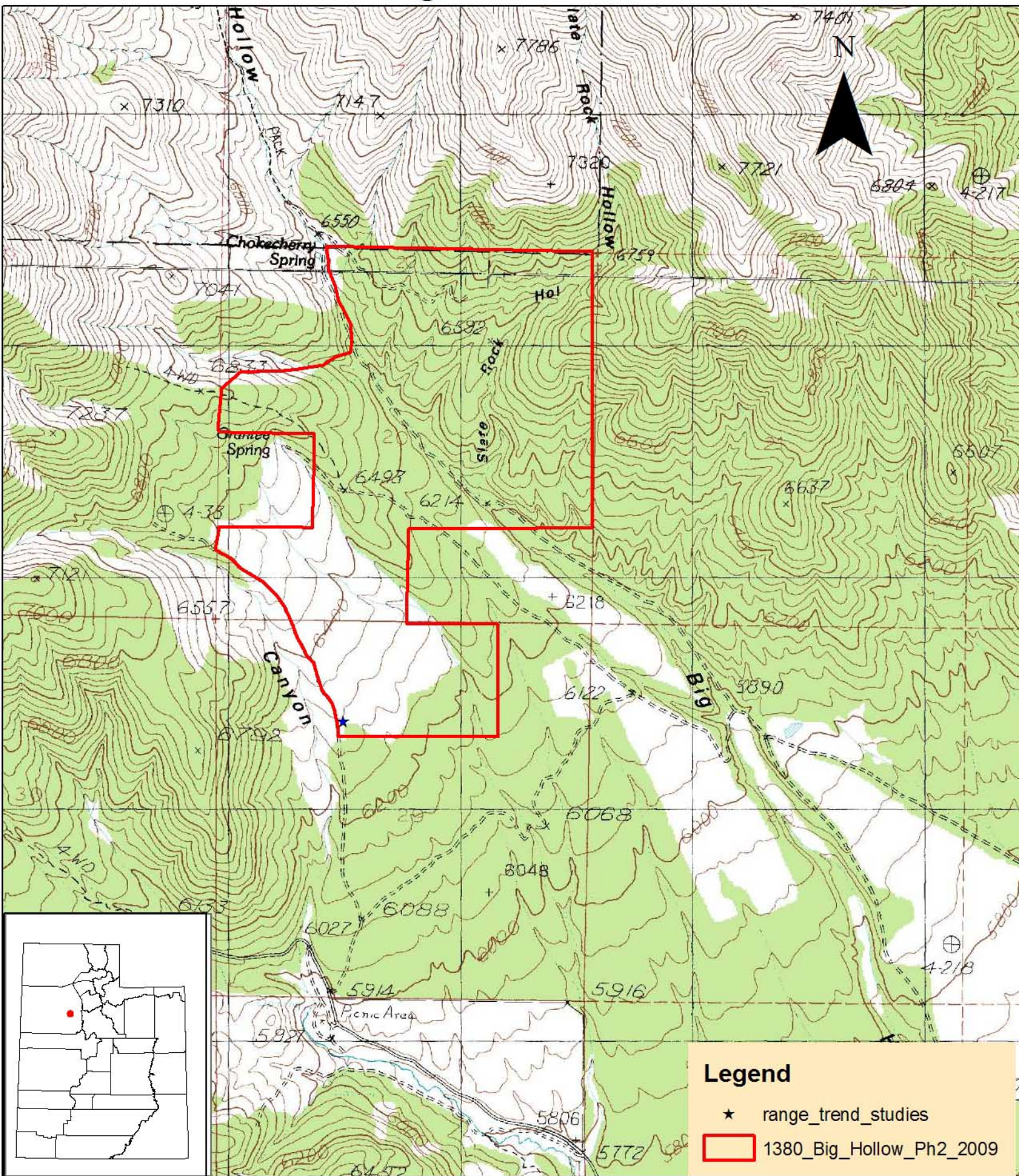
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Equipment Rental	BLM truck for seasonal	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
Archaeological Survey	Cultural clearance for 533 acres @ \$19.30/acre	\$0.00	\$10,287.00
Personal Services	burn plan beyond normal staff time	\$0.00	\$3,500.00
Contractual Services	Lop, scatter & pile 143 acres @ \$400/acre	\$0.00	\$57,200.00
Personal Services	Pile burning, mop-up, and monitoring of piles	\$0.00	\$12,500.00
Contractual Services	Bullhog contract for 282 acres @ \$230/acre	\$64,860.00	\$0.00
Totals		\$64,860.00	\$91,587.00

Project Map:

#1380 Big Hollow Phase 2



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